

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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DIELDRIN PESTICIDE CAUSING INCREASING NUMBER OF BALD EAGLE DEATHS

Commissioner Charles H. Meacham of the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service reported today that scientists at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Md., have detected pesticide poisoning from dieldrin in growing numbers of bald eagles found dead in the United States.

Dieldrin is a persistent pesticide like DDT, but considerably more toxic. Residue analyses are performed at the Patuxent Center, operated by Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, for all bald eagles found dead in the United States by cooperators.

The national bird is declining in numbers in most parts of the country except Alaska, where about 7,000 bald eagles remain.

Commissioner Meacham said that in 1968, the last year for which research results have been completed, 7 of 26 bald eagles examined had high levels of dieldrin in the brain. Two of these birds also were diseased, but dieldrin was the only apparent cause of death in the remaining five. The dieldrin victims came from Florida, Wisconsin, Maryland, Missouri, and South Carolina.

Of the 22 bald eagles found dead in 1967, one from Minnesota had a lethal dosage--9.5 parts per million. Of 21 found dead in 1966, none had lethal levels of dieldrin.

Commissioner Meacham said research at Patuxent indicates that dieldrin is hazardous to eagles when residues in the brain approach about 4 parts per million.

Other birds also are affected by this pesticide. Patuxent reports that an osprey recently found dead in Connecticut had 8 parts per million dieldrin in the brain.